

# The PTC ABRSM Teaching Diploma Course

## Section 1. TEACHING SKILLS VIVA VOCE

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**The Teaching Skills Viva Voce is allocated 60% of the total marks and takes up to 40 minutes of the 60-minute exam.**

The Teaching Skills Viva Voce is an opportunity for you to demonstrate to the examiners that you understand the principles of piano teaching and have considered teaching approaches and strategies.

Your ability to perform to a set standard will also be assessed. You will be expected to show your understanding of the idiom of the piano, and this understanding must be derived from practical, not just theoretical, experience.

You should also be prepared to discuss your Written Submission and matters arising from it. This is not applicable if you are using your PTC Written Submission exemption.

#### Teaching Materials

You should bring a variety of materials for use with pupils, among which should be some of the current ABRSM graded repertoire for the piano up to and including Grade 6 level. You should be familiar not only with the repertoire but also with the other requirements for each of these grades (including the Prep Test), and you should be prepared to discuss issues relating to the teaching of pupils up to and including Grade 6.

#### Demonstration

In order to demonstrate to the examiners that you are able to perform authoritatively to students at the level of ABRSM Grade 6, the materials you bring to the exam must include a selection of pieces chosen by you from the current Grade 6 piano syllabus: You must prepare three pieces, one from each of the three lists A, B and C, and be able to perform extracts from these pieces as selected by the examiners, and discuss teaching and learning issues as they arise. The examiners may also ask you about other pieces in the Grade 6 lists.

#### PTC Subsidiary Tasks

In order to help you prepare for the breadth and depth of the Teaching Skills Viva Voce, the PTC has broken this down into four subsidiary tasks with deadlines:

- a. Beginner up to Grade 3: Teaching rationale and approach, with list of resources and (mainly ABRSM) repertoire – in preparation for **Thursday 22nd October 2020**
- b. Grade 4-5: Teaching rationale and approach, with list of resources and ABRSM repertoire – in preparation for **Sunday 25th November 2020**
- c. Professional Values and Practices update – bringing them to the course on **Thursday 9th April 2021**
- d. Grade 6: Performance and Teaching Task (see separate sheet) – in preparation for a Teaching DipABRSM **mock exam with coaching on Friday 9th April 2021**. There will be

further coaching and performance opportunities through until the end of the course on **Sunday 20th June 2021.**

## Typical topics for discussion in the Teaching Skills Viva Voce

- **Musical outlook:** questions designed to put you at ease and to lead into the discussion, including: identification of the materials brought to the exam; knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with your instrument. [You will find the holistic and comprehensive PTC Guiding Principles extremely useful here].
- **Technique:** knowledge and understanding of the techniques required to perform repertoire up to and including ABRSM Grade 6, and demonstration of approaches to teaching and performing them at this level, including posture, intonation, scales and exercises, tone production, articulation and phrasing.
- **Pedagogy:** knowledge and understanding of the teaching and learning process, including: appropriate strategies for teaching individuals and (where appropriate) groups, and awareness of different learning styles; lesson planning, content and structure; assessment issues and reflective practice; teaching musicianship and instrumental/performance skills; practice; motivation.
- **Written Submission:** points of clarification, discussion of the topic chosen and the sources used. This is not applicable if you are using your PTC Written Submission exemption.
- **Repertoire:** knowledge of repertoire for students up to and including ABRSM Grade 6 level, including tutor books, exercises and other teaching resources.
- **Style and interpretation:** knowledge and understanding of musical styles and the interpretation of notation in order to produce stylistically aware performances, as well as demonstrations of how these can be taught to pupils up to and including ABRSM Grade 6 level.
- **History and background of the instrument/voice:** knowledge of the main (construction) features of the instrument/voice and how it has developed over time.
- **Professional values and practice:** understanding of the legal framework relating to teaching, including child protection, maintaining a safe learning environment, the physical well-being of pupils, and equal opportunities for all learners.

**Any further points** you wish to draw to the examiners' attention before the conclusion

## Specimen questions and indicative responses

The specimen questions below are intended to provide a clear sense of how the examiners might address the various areas of the Teaching Skills Viva Voce.

The selected indicative responses below them provide an indication of the sorts of response that would be expected from candidates within the main marking bands - Distinction, Pass or Fail.

It is important to note that these are specimen questions only, and that none of them may actually be asked in the exam. Additionally, not all areas specified below will necessarily be covered by examiners in their questioning.

## **Musical Outlook**

- Please tell us about the range of materials you have brought today.
- Which is your preferred tutor book for young beginners? What do you particularly like about it?

## **Technique**

- What would a student find difficult in this bar? How could you isolate the problem and help the student overcome it?
- How could you encourage good posture in a young player who finds the instrument cumbersome?
- Suggest some ways of practising these semiquavers.
- What are the most common faults to be found in scale and arpeggio playing? How would you remedy them?
- In teaching a Baroque piece, what would influence your choice of articulation?
- Suggest and demonstrate simple exercises to encourage good legato playing.
- How would you help a pupil to maintain a steady pulse in this section?

## **Pedagogy**

- Do you think it is important to demonstrate to a pupil? Why? (Or why not?)
- What ideally would you aim to achieve when giving a young child his/her first lesson?
- What assessment procedures would you use to inform a pupil about his/her progress?
- Do you think improvisation has a place in the early stages of learning the instrument/voice? How would you use improvisation in a lesson for a Grade 1 pupil?
- How important is it that pupils play by ear?
- Do you regard the development of musical memory to be important? How would you go about improving a pupil's memory?
- What are good practice habits and how would you encourage them?
- How would you motivate pupils to practise their scales?

## **Written submission**

PTC students may be exempt if not doing a new written submission.

## **Repertoire**

- What exercises or repertoire would you give to a Grade 2 pupil to help improve his/her tone?
- Suggest some useful contemporary repertoire for a Grade 5–6 student.
- A Grade 3 pupil would like to play some jazzy pieces – what would you suggest?
- Which tutor book would you use for an adult beginner who has already studied another instrument?
- What other pieces are there that a pupil could learn in order to develop this sort of style further?
- What sort of repertoire would you suggest for a student of Grade 6 level to help develop his/her general musicianship?

## **Style and Interpretation**

- How would you help a student develop a sense of musical style?
- How would you introduce the element of musical expression to a young pupil?
- You have a pupil who plays this Romantic genre piece rather mechanically. How would you encourage him/her to be more stylistically aware and communicative?

## **History and background of the piano**

- How would your instrument in the Baroque period have differed from the one you are using today?
- How and when would you discuss the main construction features of your instrument with a beginner pupil?
- Which design features of your instrument are different from one built in the nineteenth century?

## **Professional values and practices**

- What steps would you take to ensure that the physical well-being of your pupils is not harmed by their playing/singing?
- Give examples of ways in which you would integrate child protection policy into your teaching style.

## Three sample questions and answers

### 1. Pedagogy: What ideally would you aim to achieve when giving a young child his/her first lesson?

#### ***Distinction***

The candidate explained and described authoritatively a suitable range of activities that would normally take place in an ideal first lesson, stressing the importance of establishing a rapport with the pupil and stirring his/her imagination. A clear explanation of appropriate tension-free posture and hand position was described, together with suitable demonstrations. Basic tone production was carefully explained and demonstrated.

There was a clear awareness of the likely problem areas. The candidate went on to describe how the first notes would be introduced in an imaginative way, and there was a demonstration of how some basic improvisation and aural games might be included in the lesson, both to explore the sonority of the instrument and to expand upon some of the ideas introduced in the lesson. This was a highly constructive, as well as enjoyable, approach. Finally, the candidate explained how the young pupil ought to approach practice and what the expectations were.

#### ***Pass***

The candidate described a suitable range of activities for the first lesson. The need for good posture was both explained and demonstrated efficiently, although knowledge of all the possible areas of tension was incomplete. The approach was a little dogmatic, with insufficient attention paid to the physical differences between pupils. Basic tone production was explained together with strategies for dealing with common faults. The candidate described how the first notes would be introduced. Finally, there was a careful explanation of effective practice and what was expected of the young pupil in terms of time spent and organization.

#### ***Fail***

The candidate suggested a reasonable range of activities but there was a lack of imagination in the presentation and an over-reliance on printed materials. The impression was given that the lesson would be rather dull and that the interest of the pupil would not be captured. Posture was briefly described but insufficient attention was given to possible tensions. Although basic tone production was explained, there was not always a ready response in dealing with some of the more common associated problems. The candidate explained how notation would be introduced but there was insufficient use made of imaginative ways for doing so. More help was needed to encourage the young pupil to practise more effectively.

## **2. Pedagogy: What are good practice habits and how would you encourage them?**

### ***Distinction***

The candidate outlined a thorough programme of varied activities for practice, showing an understanding of the changing nature of practice as pupils develop technically and become more mature. Appropriate venues and conditions were discussed, with emphasis given to the importance of uninterrupted time and parental support. The concept of 'little and often' was endorsed.

Appropriate strategies for warming up were described and the candidate demonstrated how scales and other technical work, as well as improvisation, composition, theory and sight-reading, can all be practised by linking them with the actual pieces being studied. The candidate clearly expressed the importance of not thinking of practice as simply 'playing through the pieces' and went on to describe how to teach a pupil to practise, use of the practice notebook, and appropriate rewards for good practice. The candidate concluded by making the important link between practice and the lesson.

### ***Pass***

The candidate took a thoughtful and logical approach in describing a reasonably varied programme of activities for practice. He/she stressed the need for concentration, pointing out that it is better to practise regularly for short periods rather than occasionally for longer periods. There was a limited awareness of the need to develop practice strategies as the pupil gets older, but there was some mention of the importance of appropriate time and place for practice.

The candidate discussed the importance of warm-ups and the various areas of study that should be included, but failed to suggest any imaginative ways to connect these. The use of a practice notebook was mentioned, as was the importance of praise for good practice.

### ***Fail***

The candidate was aware of the importance of presenting pupils with a range of practice activities but few suggestions were made for ways in which these should be undertaken. There was little thought given to how practice should develop as the pupil progresses. The candidate was not able to discuss creative ideas to make practice more fun for the young pupil, nor were any approaches evident for making practice both musical and effective for the more advanced student. The candidate's responses suggested that the student was expected to practise for a set time each day and that the teacher was entitled to react with impatience when improvement between lessons was not immediately apparent. There was insufficient recognition that it was the candidate's remit to help the pupil practise in a positive and imaginative way.

### **3. Repertoire: What sort of repertoire would you suggest for a student of Grade 6 level to help develop his/her general musicianship?**

#### ***Distinction***

The candidate demonstrated a good knowledge of the various musical periods and the need to cover different styles. Selecting repertoire for different age ranges and temperaments was discussed, and the importance of finding imaginative and attractive pieces was also stressed. Materials for developing various aspects of technique, such as finger work, tone and pedalling were raised. The candidate had a ready supply of suitable examples both of pieces and studies at this level, and the areas of general musicianship that these might develop was well articulated.

#### ***Pass***

The candidate was aware of the mainstream styles of composition and the need to cover different areas of the repertoire. Examples of suitable material were offered and the candidate showed an awareness of the need to 'categorize' repertoire in order to develop specific musical and technical areas. Selecting pieces to suit the character of each pupil was considered important by the candidate.

#### ***Fail***

The candidate showed an insufficient awareness of the styles of the chosen Grade 6 repertoire and an inability to name representative composers in each period. Some 'fun' repertoire was suggested, but all-round instrumental and musical development was not considered. The candidate was unable to mention appropriate repertoire for developing specific areas of musical understanding and technique.

## Marking Criteria

### **42-60 Distinction**

Outstanding communication skills and assured demonstration of the principles of instrumental/ vocal teaching. Commanding knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire, and the techniques required to perform and teach that repertoire. An excellent grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. An excellent knowledge of professional values and practice.

### **36-41 High Pass**

Impressive and persuasive communication skills. A thoroughly convincing demonstration of the principles of instrumental/ vocal teaching. A comprehensive knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire, and the techniques required to perform and teach that repertoire. A firm grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. A very good knowledge of professional values and practice.

### **30-35 Clear Pass**

Good communication skills. A convincing demonstration of the principles of instrumental/ vocal teaching. A thorough working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire, and the techniques required to perform and teach that repertoire. A broad grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. A good knowledge of professional values and practice.

### **24-29 Pass**

Competent communication skills. A broadly convincing demonstration of the principles of instrumental/ vocal teaching. A working knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire, and the techniques required to perform and teach that repertoire. A grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. A satisfactory knowledge of professional values and practice.

### **0-23 Fail**

Weak communication skills. Little understanding of the principles of instrumental/vocal teaching. Patchy knowledge of the instrument, its idiom and repertoire, and the techniques required to perform and teach that repertoire. Unconvincing grasp of the issues raised in the Written Submission. Overall, insufficient evidence to give confidence in an ability to teach.